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'Editorial Introduction'

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## Editorial Introduction

This is the ninth edition of *Participations*. In this edition we present three essays addressing very different kinds of audiences. One is a wide-ranging examination of audiences for the very popular videogame *Resident Evil*. Samantha Lay uses a range of methods to explore the kinds of pleasures sought and attained by game-players. The second is a close study of the author's own interactions with his very young child. Aware of all the complexities involved in doing an auto-ethnography, Matt Briggs considers how parent-child interactions can simultaneously bring into view, and help to develop, a child's understandings of a favourite television programme. In the third essay, Ian Huffer investigates how female fans of Sylvester Stallone find pleasure, including erotic pleasure, in his body, and in and through the narratives of his films.

On this occasion, all three essays are UK-sourced. That's entirely accidental – and not something I would like to see regularly repeated (and indeed is rare in previous editions). But it provokes an ironic thought. The UK, not least through the contributions of the work and ideas arising from the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, has been one (but of course by no means alone) among the major sources of audience research in recent years. And what we see in the three essays in this edition is a recognition of the complexity of questions, definitions, concepts and methods which has always been the strength of cultural studies – along, of course, with its sharp critical reconsiderations of, in particular, the mass communications tradition.

So, it is a worrying thing to note that, as we were preparing this edition for publication, the Justice Department of the British Government was preparing to try to ram through a new Criminal Justice Bill – a portmanteau Bill, if ever there was one – containing among a host of other provisions one which will criminalize the possession of “extreme pornography” downloaded off the Internet. Even more relevant, from our point of view, is the fact that the Department commissioned a ‘Rapid Evidence Assessment’ on whether such “extreme pornography” could be demonstrated by research to be ‘harmful’. Authored by three people with no background at all in any field of media research (and, curiously, assessed by four PhD students ...), the resultant REA, now available, is one of the most appalling reproductions of mass communications orthodoxy it is possible to imagine. It draws only on the most narrow range of laboratory-based researches. There might just as well never have been all the substantial reviews and critiques of the sources, bases, conceptualisations and methods of this tradition. It ‘does the job’. In short, the REA is a scabrous piece of work. That will not stop it being quoted, used, and persuasive.

In an [early edition](#) of *Participations* we carried the debate occasioned by the “Amici Brief” lodged with an American court, on behalf of an alliance of lawyers, civil activists, and critical academics. A Journal cannot do all that much – but we will continue both to try to publish as wide a range of critically-alert researches as we are able, and to comment on and engage with bad uses of research in the public sphere anywhere in the world.

### **Other resources and organisations in our field**

*Participations* is, to our best knowledge, the only Journal specifically devoted to the field of audience and reception research. But we recognise and very much welcome that there are overlaps of interest with other journals and other organisations. We want to contribute to the overall development of our field of work in as many ways as possible. We therefore invite all organisations devoted to this field either to send us an appropriate electronic flyer, or to provide us with links to a relevant website. As a first step towards this, we are linking to *Intensities*, the online Journal of Cult Media – at their new website <http://intensities.org/>.

Also, we want to draw readers’ attention to ECREA – the European Communication Research and Education Association – which has an audiences section. [This page](#) gives details of ECREA’s organisation and activities. See also their website at: <http://www.ecrea.eu/divisions/section/id/1>.

If any other Journal or organisation would wish to place such a link onto our website, please contact us via our editorial email address.

Contact (by email): [Martin Barker](#)

